PS
3507
E465
T9
1918

THE TWO CROMWELLS

BY

LIDDELL DE LESSELINE

Class PS3507
Book .E465T9
Copyright No. 1918

COPYRIGHT DEPOSIT.

THE TWO CROMWELLS

A TRAGEDY IN THREE ACTS

BY

LIDDELL DE LESSELINE

CINCINNATI
STEWART & KIDD COMPANY
1918

PS3507
.E465T9
1918

COPYRIGHT, 1918, BY
LIDDELL DE LESSELINE
All Rights Reserved
COPYRIGHT IN ENGLAND

MAR 1 1918
©CLA501539
no. 1.

CONTENTS

PAGE

Dramatis Personae..... 5

Prefatory Note..... 7

Act I..... 17

Act II..... 33

Act III..... 59

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

OLIVER CROMWELL, Lord Protector of England.

RICHARD CROMWELL, the son of Oliver, and his successor as Lord Protector.

EDWARD WHALEY, RICHARD INGOLDSBY, } Colonels in Cromwell's army.

CHARLES FLEETWOOD, Oliver's son-in-law, and a General in his army.

ISAAC DESBOROUGH, Oliver's brother-in-law, and a General in his army.

GEORGE MONK, JOHN LAMBERT, } Generals in Cromwell's army.

WILLIAM LENTHALL, SIR ANTHONY ASHLEY COOPER, } Members of Cromwell's Council.

SIR HENRY SLINGSBY, a condemned conspirator.
MRS. FRANCES SLINGSBY, wife of the conspirator.

A Lieutenant of the Guard, a Lackey, Pikemen and Musketeers.

SCENE — IN LONDON.

TIME — The end of Oliver's Protectorate, through to the end of Richard's.

PREFATORY NOTE

The world's verdict is generally just. There is more poignancy than volume to the echo, in experience, of the bitter musings of the mountain poet who lately sank to his rest beyond the Sierras:

"In men whom men condemn as ill
I find so much of goodness still;
In men whom men pronounce divine
I find so much of sin and blot"—

The misunderstood man, debited with the bad which is his in appearance only, and not credited with the good which is his in reality, is a rarity. Character, manifesting itself in a thousand ways, all corroborative and cumulative, is a cynosure for witnesses and judges, who are not slow or stupid in sifting evidence. If a man is weighed in the balance, and found wanting, there is a defect somewhere; but both the judicial- and the non-judicial-minded will look for it in the man, and not in the balance.

Now and then a verdict is reversed, or modified, because, for example, it is found to have been too largely shaped by party bias, or too largely based upon conduct, apart from its source and mould in the motive. Such a reversal took place in the case of Oliver Cromwell, when an impartial study of

his character showed that his dark deeds were the reflexes, not of a selfish ambition, but of a grim sword-and-pike religious-mindedness; and, if we are to accept the humanitarian declarations of Richard Cromwell, at the time of his abdication, he, also, may be rehabilitated, and become as heroic a figure, in surrender, as Oliver was, in conquest.

Barren and uninteresting as the theme of the rehabilitation of Richard Cromwell would be, except, perhaps, to a society of antiquarians, there is, in his story, a suggestion of self-sacrifice, an element of renunciation, which should invest it with tragic dignity and pathos.

One who is a student of the tragic drama, and, at the same time, of social and economic conditions, past and present, will find it rather singular that none of the master dramatists have ever broadly developed the theme of the altruistic obligation of a ruler, and of the sublimity of self-effacement, when volunteered out of compassion for the sufferings of those who bear the brunt, in the assertion of princely claims, and in the striving for personal glory.

The sacrificing of greatness for the sake of the calloused shoulders on which the cost of that greatness is laid, should have been a far mightier theme in the hands of Sophocles or Shakespeare than any they ever undertook. It may be that the portray-

ing of human misery, with the vividness and pathos which distinguish the loftiest tragedy, is not compatible with the development of a general theme or of an abstract "problem," but no true believer in the potency of tragedy will be content to recognize that there are barriers against its entering a field which should be its widest and richest,—where its teachings may soften the hearts of tyrants, and ease the lot of the misgoverned.

Generous self-immolation could not, of course, escape the dramatic fancy of genius, hence the "Coriolanus" of Shakespeare, the "Alcestis" of Euripides, and the "Prometheus Bound" of Æschylus.

The renunciation of Coriolanus is, however, more that of a traitor brought back to his allegiance under the compulsion of the tears of his wife and mother; "Alcestis" is a tender, though, it may be said, a familiar picture of a wife laying down her life for her husband; and it is only in "Prometheus Bound" that the motif of a martyrdom for the sake of the many is found. Yet the spectacle of Prometheus, a god, suffering the displeasure of Zeus for having imparted to savage man the arts which civilized him, and lifted him up to contest for dominion with the dwellers on Olympus, is impressive in the same way that distant lightning is: it carries no immediate lesson to those who sway "the rod of empire."

But tragedy, in common with the rest of the

so-called literary drama, not having flourished of late, holds itself much injured—a sort of Cinderella sister, dwelling lonely and neglected in the ashes of editorial and managerial pigeon-holes, while her wicked and empty-headed sisters, Vaudeville and Musical Comedy, go flaunting forth to the stage.

The fault has been altogether tragedy's, and not the public's. When melodrama undertook to masquerade as tragedy, the cheat was at once detected, but more insidious has been the masquerading of pathology as tragedy—of pathology with its surgical riotings in individual post-mortems and social dissections. "I make men as they ought to be; Euripides, men as they are," said Sophocles. If Euripides could compare himself with a composite of his recent successors, he might say, "I make men as they are, in health; John Doe men as they are, in disease."

Good examples may be found on every hand. In the plays of some celebrated authors of the time we see tragic power busy with the gruesome and the morbid, without any of the adornment, the imagery, the philosophy, the grace, the irony, and the pathos, which enable the tragic drama to fulfill its great office of transmuting that which, in itself, is sordid or contemptible into dignity, beauty, power, and majesty. The tragic drama may draw "iron tears down Pluto's cheek" in vain, if it

forgets that the actually diseased or criminal can have no appeal, unless, by the admirableness or sweetness of the tragic motive, they are transfused, as by the glow of a halo,—unless, by the richness of the dramatic ornamentation, they are clothed, as with regal purple.

Nor can tragedy have cause to complain of the neglect and aversion into which it falls when it undertakes to weave history into drama. Very great is the allurement, to the tragic dramatist, of such stories as those on which "Anthony and Cleopatra," "Richard III," "Henry VIII," and "Julius Cæsar" are based; yet, though immortal as historical tragedies, those plays were not competent vehicles for the splendors which confer upon "King Lear," "Hamlet," and "Othello" their primacy in tragic literature. For drawing too heavily upon history the one supreme dramatic faculty paid the penalty of the subjection of its airy fancy to incarceration within the prison walls of fact.

Yet, as to the strugglings, glories, shames, and passions of the race, the record of what has been should be a safer quarry for dramatic raw material than the fancying by the dramatist of what such glories, shames, passions, and strugglings may be. The dramatist may borrow from history if, on the one hand, he does not allow his art to be circumscribed any more by what has been than by what may be; and if, on the other hand, he manages to

keep within the verisimilitude of history. By blending the historical, the mythical, and the apocryphal, he projects himself above the common reach of gravitation, where it rests solely with him to make or to mar his performance by the fullness or the flatness of his invention, imagination, philosophy, and soul.

What, now, of the guilt of presumption for having spoken thus of the heights of Parnassus? He should be acquitted, who has done so, with his deficiencies weighing too heavily upon him to imagine that he has reached an eyrie upon its summit, or has begun to ascend, at its foot.

ACT ONE

ACT I

[SCENE: *Richard Cromwell's reception-room in Whitehall Palace.*

A convivial party is at table: Richard, Whaley, Ingoldsby, Fleetwood and others.]

RICHARD [*glass in hand, as if proposing a toast*]. Here's death to thee, Grief! Here's thy shroud, thy grave, thy catacombs!

INGOLDSBY. O, the same grasshopper will bury Grief, and all its grandchildren; it's Care that never dies.

RICHARD. Care is a sea; but here's the King Canute it does obey! [*Holding up his glass.*] King Canute! You roll back the flood of care; now still the wavelets of habit, which the six-o'clock reveille, and the dull, brutal tyranny of labor, awaken into raging breakers!

OMNES. It is decreed. [*They drink.*]

WHALEY. O, King Canute, now roll back the momentum, habit, and tyranny of pleasure! [*Holding glass for a toast.*]

OMNES. Um-um, can we drink to that?

WHALEY. Too much is gout, — bloat, — drivel—

INGOLDSBY. Treason, Treason! 'Twould be a lackadaisical, mechanical pleasure that would submit itself to the domination of rule or precept.

WHALEY. Then, on, Canute, with the surges of pleasure,—wild, untam'd, furious, and tempestuous—

RICHARD. Whaley, you surrender gracefully, but that raw, heretical notion of yours constitutes a disturbance of our revel. Sirs, what shall the penalty be?

INGOLDSBY. Ah, a song,—'t will darken his spotless Puritan soul with a little human discoloration.

RICHARD [*to Whaley*]. The penalty is too light, Sir Felon. We hang, for house-breaking or murder, though false doctrine like yours contaminates, while false doing does not; yet out of grace and mercy, we allow you to alkali the acid of your guilt with a song.

WHALEY. O, kind masters, your leniency overwhelms me.

RICHARD. Hold; we'll not punish ourselves by staying dry while you sing; nor shall we condemn you to sing while parched with thirst; 't would be cruel and inhuman. [*They drink.*]

[*Whaley sings.*]

O, wise is he who wisdom spurns,
When it of him a packhorse makes;
O, dolt is he who never turns
To beauty, mirth and ale and cakes!

(Applause.)

O, great is he who greatness sheds,
When it for him a treadmill raises;
O, weak is he who fortune weds,
When all around are love and daisies!
(Applause.)

[*Enter Lackey.*]

LACKEY. Mr. Richard?

RICHARD. Yes.

LACKEY. The Lord Protector is coming in; and there is a lady, who was afraid the Protector might see her.

[*The party breaks up in flight, carrying the evidences of their wassail with them.*]

[*Enter Oliver with Lieutenant. The Lieutenant places himself on guard at the entrance.*]

RICHARD. Have this chair, father.

OLIVER [*seats himself weariedly; then, as if to throw off thought*]. I dare say you find Whitehall very gloomy, Richard?

RICHARD. Not always.

OLIVER [*musingly*]. Work is no antidote for the perplexities which sit o' nights on my pillow.

RICHARD. Why, work is the regular diet of those pillow-imps, father. They pamper up on it, and turn into two-headed griffins, that generate calamities. I always starve 'em to death.

OLIVER. You must get into harness, Richard.

RICHARD. If I get into harness, and pull half the world for a lifetime, shall I, or the world either, be any better off?

OLIVER. That notion would dam up the Solway, and make it a stagnant pond. Achievement may not bring joy, but to achieve not brings extinction.

RICHARD. To achieve is more apt to bring extinction for others. That is probably the way Henry Slingsby looks at it, as between yourself and himself.

OLIVER. The wine of our advancement *is* drawn from a steep, wherein our merit is mixed with the disappointments and failures of our fellows; but that does not hasten or darken the doom of a gallow's-bird. They say Slingsby has genius; yes, for crime. I look back and marvel at my escape from his cunning net.

RICHARD. I'd be so thankful I'd let him go.

OLIVER. Let him go? Is your old infatuation laying snares like that for you?

RICHARD. I'd spare him, to soften a few hatreds. It is not my infatuation that tells me harshness does not win men; nor would I like to believe that my infatuation lasted after Frances decided in favor of Slingsby.

OLIVER. Humph! To win men! You'd coax tough hearts and evil passions from their set ways by sentimental words and tender strokings?

Petting always gentles the hungry wolf, and dissolves the scaly crocodile into a soft, self-sacrificing soul!

RICHARD. To win men? What ruler ever troubled to do it? The motto is, "Drive 'em; Drive 'em!"

OLIVER. You are not practical, Richard. If all men were equally consecrated, equally God-fearing, equally moved by high principle, a copy of the Code which governs Heaven is all we'd need—we'd be angels dealing with each other; but as some of us who govern, and a few of the governed, are not angels, so must our methods partake of the non-angelical, the hard, and the cruel.

RICHARD. Ah, we happily come to the flowering meadows, over a pathway through forsaken ideals and dead men's bones; we greedily feed upon the immediate by a spendthrift discounting of the ultimate.

OLIVER. Whosoever putteth his foot to earth trampleth upon graves. Growth is more lusty, blossoming brighter-hued, tintings more varied over an Aceldama, once it is plowed. Be over dainty about this, and harder men will be quick to wreck thee or to slay thee, that they may build out of thy débris—that they may salvage a ha'penny-worth of marrow from thy bones.

RICHARD. You are telling me the price of greatness.

OLIVER. I am telling you the price of existence.

RICHARD. Danger and conflict and treachery are the storm on which the exulting, petrel spirit rises aloft. There is sunshine, there is calm—

OLIVER. I'll battle on, while my son dreams.

RICHARD. O, those voices—they ring out above the melée, saying, "Back; for a doubtful good to one shall you be party to driving ten thousand to their doom?"

OLIVER. Old age is upon me, with its cheating arithmetic, which adds but to subtract. I am facing the alternative of losing my authority if I do not assume the Kingship, and of losing my friends if I do. I am surrounded by traitors, of whom a swarm are back of Slingsby and Huet, their perfidy so deep, so fat with benefits, so corroding, that it is enough to eat out the immortal essence of the soul, leaving only the carnal rind, to wholly perish, as carrion, when I uncover their hiding places. It is time for you to come down out of the clouds. I need you to help me unearth the accomplices of Slingsby and Huet.

RICHARD. That conspiracy is dead. It would be a fruitless cruelty to drag forth the trembling partners to it.

OLIVER. I'll struggle on, alone.

RICHARD. Oh, if I could prove to you that no want of love holds me back—that such plagues and

terrors as death might picket and phalanx about you could not!

OLIVER. I have never doubted you, Richard. You are weighing me against fantasies, and not in those scales of advantage where love and friendship are but as feathers against guineas and shillings—where a calculating David may balance, against his interest, a heart-broken Jonathan, with the nice, adjusting eye of an apothecary.

[*Enter Lenthall.*]

LENTHALL. Your Highness, shall those weak children be orphaned at sunrise, to-morrow?

OLIVER. Those weak children have been tugging at my heart for many days. [*He pauses, reflecting; Richard lays a hand upon his arm.*]

RICHARD. To forgive may be thy diadem, to ray forth in the darkness, when thou and England art entombed.

OLIVER [*still reflecting; then, with a rush of resolution*]. God putteth his enemies under foot, and we of the Covenant—

LENTHALL. The sorrow of the little ones who will mourn the stroke is something of a coat of mail against wrath or justice.

OLIVER. There is no cruelty in beating down the cruel; and we would be compassionate lovers of our kind if we hunted thost Stuart wolf-pelts until London streets grew lonely and weedy. Yet,—Lenthall, it is before me now, as it was even at

Tredah, that we know not how we shall be judged on High for putting out a light that God has lit.

LENTHALL. Thy sword is God's and the Commons'. That it is red is due to the surgeon's office thou hast filled upon the perverse and wicked humors of this generation; yet, a little mercy—

[*Enter Lambert.*]

OLIVER. Ah, Lambert, you are welcome.

LAMBERT. I have come, Your Highness, to urge clemency for Slingsby and Huet; not on their account—

OLIVER. Too late, Lambert, the decision is final.

LAMBERT. Your Highness, it takes something more than strength to make yoke-fellows of Justice and Anarchy.

OLIVER. Come, come, Lambert, confess you are disappointed that our altars will not smoke tomorrow with a whole hecatomb of royalists.

LAMBERT. Who will not smoke upon those altars, if we do not get back to the bed-rock of respect for precedent—of obedience to a lawful Parliament?

OLIVER. How many more Nasebys and Dunbars have we fought in Parliament than out of it?

LAMBERT. There are those who love you for having sent Charles and Strafford to the scaffold for their contempt of Parliament.

OLIVER. In those days Parliament had not

become the spleen which gathered to itself all the jealousies and hates of the State,—all the cross-grained, double-galled men in England.

LAMBERT. How happy art thou, Pym, and thou, too, O Hampden and Eliot, for death to have shielded from thy sight the monument thy friend and pupil is rearing to thy teachings!

OLIVER. Despise, if you will, because, when Parliament stood in the way, I swept it aside, the work which God appointed me to do, and which I did; but do not say that Pym and Hampden and Eliot would join their crushing condemnation to yours, unless you know they would lament that I, their fellow-servant of the Covenant, when Britain was trembling from the scourgings of domestic tyranny, bound up her wounds, and put to flight her oppressors; that I found her in the slough of foreign contempt, and raised her to the crest of reverence; that I found her a divided dove-cote, and made her a breeding-place for lions.

LAMBERT. There's no other way to make England great and virtuous than to goad and harry her into it—no other way to keep righteousness up than with the prisons as a crutch and the whipping-lash as a stimulant! How much more purifying than hyssop is blood! What a tender, ministering touch the hangman's is!

OLIVER. This comes to me like an echo of the daylight blowing off in a royalist ale-house,

after a night of tippling and vowing, and of poetizing to the eyebrows of Prince Charlie's mistresses.

LAMBERT. You will hear it said elsewhere than in royalist ale-houses that all this lawlessness is part of a program for making necessary the choosing of some other King than Charlie.

OLIVER. You are a soldier, Sir, and know how rancor and sedition must be met. A night in the Tower will sober up your thoughts. [*To the officer on guard.*] Lieutenant, General Lambert is under arrest. Conduct him to the Tower. [*Exeunt Lambert and Lieutenant.*] Let us go, Lenthall. Good-night, Richard, good-night! [*Exeunt Oliver and Lenthall.*]

[*Enter Lackey.*]

LACKEY. Shall I show the lady in, Sir?

RICHARD. The lady? What lady?

LACKEY. I couldn't tell you, Sir; she is veiled.

RICHARD. Veiled? Well, show her in. [*Exit Lackey.*] Who can it be, to have waited all this time?

[*Enter Frances.*]

Frances! The same Frances!

FRANCES. I pray God it may be the same Richard.

RICHARD. You have come to ask me—

FRANCES. My despair, my knowledge, of your goodness of heart, bring me to you—

RICHARD. Ah, Frances, there is nothing I can do.

FRANCES. Oh, there must be a way. Why, Richard, it is all artificial; a nod of the head would save him. The universe has not been jostled from its socket—chaos has not upheaved through the thin and brittle crust on which we stand; it cannot be his last night on earth. Oh, you must help me.

RICHARD. How can I? How can I override the Protector and Council? Stay; there is a loop-hole: tell me who the other conspirators are, and your husband shall leave the Tower to-night, a free man.

FRANCES. Henry would not purchase his life by betraying a comrade! I would love him no longer if he wavered in the choice between living ignominously and dying nobly.

RICHARD. You are choosing between your happiness and your high-mindedness.

FRANCES. They are one and inseparable.

RICHARD. Against those who stand fast, the surges of fate, which roll placidly enough where there is no resistence, beat and rage, as the surges of the sea, when they find a rock.

FRANCES. If treachery must be his guide, he will not tread the way to freedom.

RICHARD. I might have known that peril would not be the Gorgon to turn your generous resolve into stone. Your courage, your constancy

cannot but take some of the sharpness, some of the anguish from what awaits you to-morrow.

FRANCES. If my husband is to die, I do not wish to lose any of the anguish of it! I'll drink it in as the parched throat does spring-water! Tears and heart-rackings shall be my only joys! I cannot give him up! Oh, how can the flowers ever grow afterward on the hill where his life is quenched? How can the happy laughter of children ever echo there again, on the stillest summer eve? Ah, what is that—so rigid and black, swinging and turning in the wind, with the crow perched upon it? Take it away—take it away. O, O, is this God's world or Satan's? [*She swoons.*]

RICHARD [*supporting her and looking into her face*]. When angels visit us, it must be that they draw all grace and purity to themselves! As I look upon this lovely vision, a whispering comes to me, which, if I listened to, would shrivel up my soul! O, villainous thought, is there no dagger that can reach thee? I am a man, tempter, and not a dog! At least, I thought I was. I have not kept up my prayers of late, and a leprosy has burnt its way into my conscience. It bids me to blaspheme and pour its contagion forth;—my loyal tongue will not do it; my sentinel lips would halt the first poisoned word!

FRANCES [*dreamily and half aroused.*] We are in Heaven, Henry.

RICHARD. No, Frances, you are very far from Heaven.

FRANCES. Did you notice that the paths were all lined with lilies on one side, and with primroses on the other?

RICHARD. They were not flowers; what I saw were demons.

FRANCES. Do you think a soul will be barred out forever because of the misdeeds of a moment?

RICHARD. That question will never concern you, sweet lady, and those it does concern will never pause to ask it.

FRANCES. Where is my husband? O, I know, I know.

RICHARD [*shaken; walking off in an attempt to collect himself; then, aside*]. A little more and I'll demand to be her husband's proxy, to undergo his doom.

FRANCES [*aside*]. If I am to give thee up, Henry, I'll give thee up alive, and not dead. I'll die in thy stead, nor shall I belittle thee by dying for thee only a physical death! Shall I be so selfish as to be soothed by the sweet songs of angels, and by the blessed applaudings of virtue, whilst thou art being hurled into the infinite voids? Yet, if in that way I sentence thee to live, thou'lt thank me with scorn and horror. I must pleasure thee, then, with death? Why, for thy death to be ordered on such compulsion gives it sweetness and balm. I'll

not have it. I'll have misery to the dregs. I'll have woe, contempt, despair. [*She approaches Richard.*] Richard, you loved me once?

RICHARD. Once?

FRANCES. Have you forgotten how we wandered together through the green and flowery woods, where all was peace, save for the war between the perfume of the blossoms and the musk of the pine, and all was silence save for the rivalry between the starling and the thrush?

RICHARD. How could I forget?

FRANCES. We were sometimes hand in hand.

RICHARD. Oh, we were.

FRANCES. Sometimes we sat by the shady brooks, while you read to me from the Faery Queene; and sometimes I rested on your shoulder, not all from weariness.

RICHARD. Fate, thou thief, thou tyrant!

FRANCES. If thou wouldst find what fate hath stolen, let Henry go to France, a free man.

RICHARD. To my rescue, God! To my rescue, Honor!

FRANCES. Take me to Plymouth Colony or to the Nile—to some cottage hidden among the vines, in a grove joyous with the singing of birds and the rippling of waters.

RICHARD. Gloomier than the ocean we'd pass, when tossed by storms, and overhung with darkness, it howls and stabs itself with lightnings,

because it cannot be the grave of humanity, would be all recollection of England to us.

FRANCES. There, let us forget England, these dreary palaces, this tumult of ambition, which I know you hate. There, I'll make amends to you for what you said I did to mar your life. There, under new skies, let us mend the fragments of our lives and still the clamors of our regrets.

RICHARD.

True, true, I'd escape,—
and with you,
with you—

FRANCES. Oh, the time is short. What is to be done?

RICHARD. All I can do is to win over a turnkey, and to contrive an escape. Have you a safe means of reaching Henry?

FRANCES. Oh, most safe.

RICHARD. Write him to be ready at midnight. Let us meet then in the lounging corridor of the Tower. I'll provide you with a pass.

FRANCES. Oh, they are kind enough to let me lodge in the Tower.

RICHARD. I'll go to make smooth the way—to secure the keys I'll need, and—to take my reckonings. [*Turns, staggers, as he goes. Collides with door. Places both hands to his forehead.*]

FRANCES. Oh, how much better pleased I'd be if, instead of the meek writing of a letter, it

were my part to be where danger riots, where swords are most gluttonous, where musketry bellows its loud agency for silent death. Or, if I missed the comfort of the battle's carnage, I'd be content to gather up its widows in some vast place, so that in the united volume of their raw griefs my own might be out-dinn'd. [*Falls to her knees, sobbing.*] Oh, no, no, all I want is God's mercy and forgiveness.

ACT TWO

ACT II

[SCENE I: *The lounging corridor in the Tower. At the back, centre, is a double door, locked, and heavily barred and bolted. It is night, and the place is lighted by lanterns.*

Enter Monk and Sir Anthony Ashley Cooper, conversing in undertones.]

MONK. I'll breathe easier when they are out of the way.

SIR ANTHONY. Don't be uneasy. Slingsby will never betray us.

MONK. His wife has been making desperate efforts to save him. She will weep him into trading us off, if she can; and under that kind of pressure a strong man is as feeble as a weak one. There's danger from Hewit, too. I cannot believe he had no inkling we were helping.

SIR ANTHONY. Nobody but Slingsby knows that. His wife thinks the favors we extend her are out of love and softness for an old comrade. We have left no footprints, Monk.

MONK. I hope not; but did you notice how constrained the Protector became when I entered the Council Chamber?

SIR ANTHONY. No, I noticed nothing, except that you were a trifle too profuse in congratula-

tions over the safety of his precious person, due to the approaching extinction of our unfortunate allies.

MONK. I thought to make up for your very noticeable indifference to it. You are too outspoken against the Kingship, Sir Anthony.

SIR ANTHONY. There are some causes vital enough to be battled for in the open, and plotted for in the dark. I used Slingsby, underground,—for an end, and for that same end I'd preach rebellion from the housetops.

MONK. Your ambition is too much alloyed with patriotism. It *is* galling for Oliver to give the lie to all his past by seizing the Kingship, but that is nothing to hang a martrydom on. What else matters, if we come into my Dukedom and your Earldom?

SIR ANTHONY. I do not hate myself while I am loving my country. The Earldom Prince Charles promised me has added some fuel to the flames of my enthusiasm for his cause. [*Tapping Monk on shoulder with knowing air.*] Oliver himself was ready to treat a Stuart like a human being after Charles offered to become his son-in-law. And when Nature snaps the tension she has put Oliver under, a Dukedom for the easy-going Richard may serve to hothouse our Stuart hopes into harvest.

MONK. Eh, we wooers of the goddess Suc-

cess are not jealous! we'll hire out her favors, wherever it may clear our path.

[*Enter Lackey.*]

LACKEY. General Lambert wishes to see you at the office, Sir Anthony.

SIR ANTHONY. Very well. [*To Monk.*] Let us be back when the officers begin drifting in after supper, and set ourselves to unshaping the moulding of false opinion among them.

MONK. You are beginning to let your feelings break through your policy, Sir Anthony. I'll make sure to come, to duenna your boldness. [*Exit Sir Anthony.*] One last kind act for poor Slingsby. [*Drawing letter from his pocket.*] If I had told Sir Anthony of this farewell letter, he would have fought against my curiosity, and this slight inspection. [*Carefully opens letter.*] Ha; An escape! As I feared. [*Reads.*]

"Henry: A powerful hand is aiding us.
Be ready to flee at midnight. Frances."

Slingsby carries too weighty a secret. He will learn, in time, that I insured against disaster, and made myself secure with the Protector—by a few accidental discoveries; and if I accidentally discover this letter to the Protector, that door will be closed forever. Forgive me, Slingsby, I would not injure you, but upon compulsion. I am steered, as far as any man, by generosity and brotherly love —within their natural limits. Your power for

good is gone; you were a failure as a leader—too open, too honest, too disdainful of artifice, too mindful of right and wrong, too prone to extend justice to an enemy; but, with all your faults, you were a lovable, most useful fellow. Ah, I do not relish losing you. [*Carefully re-reads letter, and replaces it in his pocket.*]

[*Enter Frances.*]

[*Aside, with an expression of consternation.*]

Mrs. Slingsby! [*She approaches hurriedly. He takes her hands cordially and compassionately.*]. Poor Henry! Poor Henry!

FRANCES. Oh, did you, did you—give him my letter.

MONK. Yes; and if there is anything else I can do—

FRANCES. Oh, General Monk, you have been so kind, so good.

MONK. What little I've done has been such a pleasure, such a pleasure. Ah, my duties call me away. You will excuse me, dear Mrs. Slingsby. [*Exit Monk.*]

FRANCES. 'Twas so short, so fleeting;—as if the fates had set an hour's happiness in a trap for our poor hearts; yet, for another such hour I'd exchange a thousand years in perdition! O, O, the day is over; I'll wrap myself in the blackness of the night,—and there'll be no to-morrow, no rendering in deeds the soul's crystal gleamings, no phœnix-

winging from the ashes of dead illusions! Every choice and royal gift was mine;—I'm no glutton! I'll accept starvation of the heart as the balance due on my account—I'll make friends with evil! Wrong, thou Goliath of the strong, I'll stock an arsenal with thy weapons! Fraud, thou friend of the weak, I'll have no other counsellor than thee! Not a tear, not one, not one; I'll not weep for myself, dear one; that I'll leave to thee. [*Exit.*]

[*Enter Whaley and Ingoldsby. They proceed to lounge, and make themselves comfortable. Whaley begins poüishing his sword. He hums, and then sings. During his song, Monk, and Lenthall stroll in.*]

WHALEY.

"She is a garden fair,
Whence Fairies banish care;
She is a cupid snare,
But her heart is right.

"She can be all disdain,
Her frown gives deadly pain,
Her's is a tyrant's reign,
But her heart is right."

INGOLDBY. That's an old-timer you are singing.

WHALEY. Yes, Prince Rupert used to sing it when he was so badly smitten on the gay Evelina Hughes. The last time he sang it was to me. We

were walking home on one of those balmy June mornings, when souls bubble over into each other, after a night of cheer at the tavern. As he ended his warbling, I said, "Oh, yes, her heart is right,—to about a dozen of you." He said: "Villain, you asperse the quintessence of goodness, the queen of beauty, the panacea for evil and gloom. Fairest of the fair, she is sweeter than she is fair; loveliest of all, she is truer than she is lovely. Oh," said he, "if Dante and Petrarch had seen my Evelina, and had not had their inspiration clogged by a dull Beatrice, and an ordinary Laura!" "Oh," said I, "if Dante had seen his Beatrice walking in the lilac lane at Windsor Castle, with her head on young Bradshaw's shoulder, or sitting with cross-ey'd Fairfax under the oaks at Hampton Court, after dusk, encircled by his industrious arm, as I have"— He looked at me pitifully, and said, "You give me a mortal blow, Whaley." I said, "Banish the jade from your thoughts, Prince." He turned away, helplessly, and said, "Ask Bradshaw and Fairfax to do that."

[*Enter Sir Anthony, L.*]

Sir Anthony [*aside*]. Lambert behind the bars! What next? What next? John Milton in the stocks, I suppose, and Jeremy Taylor in the ducking-stool! There's Lenthall, turned pander to Oliver's ambition. [*Approaches Lenthall, who is standing in a group, and places a hand on his*

shoulder.] This is not my staunch, roundhead soldier friend Lenthall; it is the ghost of some cavalier hero of idle days and riotous nights drawn by the familiar, alluring glitter of a crown, to come back, and haunt the ancient Paradise we drove him from?

MONK. Ha! Ha! What a jolly wag Sir Anthony is!

SIR ANTHONY [*sourly*]. A wag?

MONK. Ha! Ha! Here he is poking fun at Lenthall.

SIR ANTHONY. Poking fun? [*Fiercely.*]

MONK. For turning royalist, while he preaches to me that all the Kings England has had, if moulded into one, would stand pygmy-like in fitness and deserving, alongside of Oliver.

SIR ANTHONY. I? Preaching Oliver's greatness?

MONK [*edging himself in front of Sir Anthony*]. If the bloody husbandry of war yields a harvest, who should reap it but those whose swords were the ploughshares?

LENTHALL. Is Cromwell reaping when he begins to reign, or is England itself sowing?

INGOLDSBY. Good Sirs, let us not debate the shadow before the substance exists. Who can say the Protector will accept the crown?

SIR ANTHONY. Accept it? Humph! The lion is noted for chasing his prey to exhaustion, and

slaughtering it, and then turning away, hungry, [*Turning to Whaley and Ingoldsby, who have been conversing apart.*] Ah, Whaley and Ingoldsby can tell us what has been decided on. They are authentic. They may even be the storks who are about to lay King Oliver I on the nation's doorstep.

WHALEY. Storks have wings; and wings add swiftness to flight; so, my dear Sir Anthony, for the sake of your military career let me not usurp the office of stork. 'Twill prove useful to you in your next battle.

MONK [*acting as a buffer between Whaley and Sir Anthony*]. Why waste so much thought on the Kingship? Whether as King or Protector, we have a leader we love and trust—who possesses every great quality, and no petty one.

WHALEY. Sound, as usual, Monk.

SIR ANTHONY. Can you bring yourself to raise the House of Cromwell as another barrier to the equality of man; to blister your throat with "God save King Oliver;" to kneel before that conveniency to sit upon which is called a throne; to accept the caprices of weak flesh and blood as divine laws; to condemn genius and beauty to be the censers for swinging before royalty and its satellites the adulation the gods on Olympus have lost?

INGOLDSBY. As long as a King can be useful, I am willing to give him his empty distinctions.

When he goes to making others useful to him, chop his head off.

SIR ANTHONY. If for the cropped ears and slit nose of every Prynne the head of a Charles should fall, your programme would be beautiful.

WHALEY. Oliver takes up tne Kingship as the Great Mace before which disorder's din is hushed, and its torch extinguished.

SIR ANTHONY. What usurpation ever lacked that pretext? So many roaring destroyers of monarchy roar no more since Oliver began itching for the crown.

WHALEY. I'm an echo, ha?

SIR ANTHONY. Oh, not at all; an echo is inevitable: you are silent until your original gives you leave.

MONK. Anything can be smoothed over between friends. Whaley, you know that if Sir Anthony errs, it is from exaggerating our cause; Sir Anthony, you know that if Whaley errs, it is from exaggerating our leader.

WHALEY. I know that if Sir Anthony were a champion of Truth, he would most certainly exaggerate his cause.

SIR ANTHONY. Is this the studied insolence sent ahead by usurpation to clear the way for it, or is it the effervescence of a coffee-house bully, gone unduly long without the drubbings that enwisdom him in picking safe targets for his hectoring?

MONK. Dissension! Heart-burning! When the happy slaughtering to-morrow of those hang-dog, desperado designers of our ruin is about to give us so much to rejoice over!

WHALEY. Have I stemmed the rush of Rupert's cavalry to be run over by a fetlock, a spavin, a fistula?

SIR ANTHONY. Did Winchester and Naseby hiss and seethe around me, and leave me unharmed, to be spitted on the gibes of an empty, frothing clout? [*They fight. Musketeers and pikemen come rushing in. The majority join against Whaley. Monk, after feebly endeavoring to play peacemaker, makes a discreet exit.*]

[*Enter Richard.*]

RICHARD. Strange, I do not flee. Whose courage have I stolen? Before it evaporates I'll lend a hand,—to the weaker side. [*Draws his sword, and engages. Disables a musketeer.*] That was not a scoundrel's thrust. [*Strikes down a pikeman.*] That was not a milksop's blow. [*Rushes upon the struggling mass, and breaks up the fight. The combatants retire, in semi-flight. The fallen arise unsteadily and hobble off. Richard wipes his sword, and replaces it in the scabbard.*] What a delicacy for wounded and convalescent honor a killing is! [*Some of the lanterns go out. It is nearly midnight. The place is in semi-darkness.*] Quiet and solid as are

these walls, I'm far out on a stormier sea than any the wakeful mother gazes upon through the night, praying for her storm-tossed sailor son. The ocean foam by which I'm lashed is made up of the sanctities I once lived in! The wreckage dashing by is not from my foundered ship; it is the splintered habitation of my soul! O, I've clung to driftwood, and cheated the depths of the prey that was almost their's! I'll send her with him, with this letter saying that what I promised I've carried out, but that which she promised is released and cancelled. O, what is it that sweeps us on to dishonor, hating it, and despising ourselves as its dishrag troop? Can it be the same power that shapes conquest from the dust of surrender, that crushes wrong in the egg, by purifying the intention; that disannuls wrong in its hardened age, by accepting its repentance?

[*Enter Frances.*]

FRANCES. Is all in readiness?

RICHARD. All, except—

FRANCES. Let us lose no time.

[*Richard unbolts the door. He produces the key, unlocks the door, and swings it open, disclosing, in the distance, a row of cells.*]

FRANCES [*rushes to the door*]. O, where is he?

RICHARD. Strange he is not ready!

FRANCES. Are we too early?

RICHARD. He is not even on the look-out!

FRANCES [*calling softly*]. Henry!

VOICE FROM CELL. O, do not torment me, sweet face.

FRANCES [*calling again*]. Henry!

VOICE FROM CELL. Satan, thou art borrowing her voice to break my peace with God.

FRANCES. Henry! It is I, Frances. You are safe; you are safe!

[*Richard unlocks the door of Slingsby's cell, and throws it open.*]

[*Enter Oliver, with pikemen and musketeers, in charge of a Lieutenant.*]

[*One of the pikemen, with a torch, throws light into the interior of cell, showing Sir Henry Slingsby on his knees, with bowed head, in an attitude of prayer.*]

OLIVER. A little jail-robbing party, eh? I'm not intruding? I'm slightly interested in the throat that fellow wants another whack at; and I've come to protest against his getting it. [*Soldiers enter Slingsby's cell, and seize him. Oliver points to Slingsby.*] He won't need watching long, Lieutenant. Don't let him get out of sight until the rope is on him. [*Frances sobs.*] This, I see, is the sorrowing widow; and this,—why—who—not Richard, my son?

RICHARD. It is I, Richard. Let me tell you why—

OLIVER. Away—

RICHARD. Father—

OLIVER. Not a word. You will not be trusted again. The keys! [*Richard hands keys to Oliver, who takes them and points to the entrance.*] Go! [*Exit Richard.*]

[*At a sign from Oliver, the Lieutenant takes the keys and closes the door of Slingsby's cell, and locks it.*]

OLIVER [*to two of the musketeers*]. Remain here on guard. [*The musketeers station themselves at the door of Slingsby's cell. The Lieutenant closes, bolts, and locks the main door.*] Lieutenant, take charge of this lady. Take your men with you. [*Exeunt all but Oliver and the guard.*]

What is it that blots out this picture of villainy? I see him now as he was thirty years ago, —rosy, dimpled and tender, tumbling about my knees in play, and coming with tired feet and drowsy eyes, to nestle in my arms to sleep. This is the harvest. Then, if I had sown with unkindness and injustice, he would have blossomed with virtues. Oh, Richard, if this had been impatient ambition in thee, I'd have said, "Thou hast but a little while to wait," or, if tough nature bore me up too long, I'd have asked thee to let me exchange my state for a hermit's cave, where, with horsehair for my garments, and charitable offal for my food, I might have rejoiced at thy greatness. I did

not train thee up as I should, my son. Was it not my peremptory office to know when thou beganst drifting among the lost and perjured, and to come, if need be, from the ends of the earth, to fetch thee back to thy duty? I did not watch over thee. The pall of thy guilt settles widely, and covers both of us. I did not guard thee. I did hold out to thee that there is a way to arm the spirit for mastery of the universe, and to bathe it in the kingliness which atmospheres the pathway up to God —all to no avail; to no avail, because, I see, I did not have what I sought to impart. I let slip my opportunities to put my arm about thee, and by an ebb and flow of thought between us, train thy nature to visit that dreaded realm, which pain and trial and sorrow are the ushers to, and where now and then they strike from the ultimate the flash which reveals the futility of wrong—where now and then they lift from the everlasting an edge of its veil, so that by its radiance the false and trivial is expelled and hidden away, as the stars are at midday. [*With his head sunk low, and showing great feebleness, he makes his exit.*]

[SCENE II: *A room in Whitehall. At night. Outside it is storming. Enter Whaley and Monk.*]

WHALEY. Monk, if you need to be put in a good humor, let me recommend that you go down, and be smiled upon by His Eminence.

MONK. His Eminence?

WHALEY. Why, yes,—Slingsby; he aimed at eminence by getting Old Noll's head on his pike, and he has arrived at it by getting his head on Old Noll's pike. Ha! Ha!

MONK. His Eminence! Ha! Ha! I'll go down and do obeisance, until I'm worked up into enough reverence to drop in at the tavern and toss off a toast to the quick translation of His Eminence into crow-bait.

WHALEY. I'm not enjoying this hanging as I should, Monk; I'm worried about the Protector. No one knows what happened last night, but the Protector has had some kind of a shock. More revelations in the Slingsby case, I dare say.

MONK. More revelations? Have you any idea—

WHALEY. Slingsby confessed, I'm sure.

MONK. Confessed? No, no; fortitude does not confess; determination does not surrender.

WHALEY. Nothing else could have shaken the Protector so. Depend upon it, Slingsby made a bid for his life by telling the whole story. We'll have another batch of conspirators in the Tower by night.

MONK. That would be—splendid; but—if Slingsby did confess, what would it amount to? Who would believe the lies of a cut-throat, in-

vented for no other purpose than to sow suspicion in the Protector's circle?

WHALEY. A hint would be enough. To frown accusingly at guilt will send its knocking knees zigzagging into the jaws of discovery. Ha! Ha! Monk, if the crop of conspirators should fail, how'd we keep our rookeries fat?

MONK [*off guard*]. Don't speak of discovery. I hear the ravens croaking now.

WHALEY. Can there be a more agreeable sound?

MONK [*recovering himself*]. O, Whaley? Whaley, I cannot bear to see the Protector's noble heart wrung with fresh treacheries. He has become an old man under the strain of the last few weeks. If his health should fail, if his precious life should be snuffed out, our cause would go like a candle in a storm.

WHALEY. Here comes the Protector now. How changed he is!

[*Enter Oliver.*]

OLIVER. Gentlemen, I give you welcome,—as heartily—as a man without heart can. [*Takes their hands.*]

WHALEY [*bringing forward a chair, which Monk, bustling officiously, helps Oliver into*]. Sorry you are not well, Your Highness.

MONK. So am I, Your Highness; but what grieves me more is that nature has set her barriers

to friendship, so that a life like mine cannot be pieced on to one like yours, to shorten days which are insignificant, and to make double the length of days which are glorious.

OLIVER. I thank thee, Monk. There is comfort in the clasp of thy honest hand, and in the glance of thy fiduciary eye; and my need for it is great. I have uncovered the falsity of one so dear to me that grief has beset me with her pack of curs, tongu'ing forth in full cry that there are no true hearts left, and that what is good and virtuous is lingering yet a few feeble days, only to be fed upon by the all-conquering gluttony of evil.

[*Enter Desborough.*]

DESBOROUGH. Sirs, you are very placid here, as veterans, who are the ashes of strife, ought to be. To be unruffled in the midst of alarms is a badge of greatness, and I am not afraid of disturbing you with the news that Cuny's writ against the taxes we need to fill our empty Treasury has been granted.

OLIVER [*vacantly*]. Cuny. [*Musingly.*] Who is he? [*Recollecting.*] Cuny! [*Starting up, with an effort.*] Has that fester won his writ? It could only have been before a judge to whom a well-argu'd quibble looks like a lever long enough to move the earth. It makes no difference—what money we need we'll have, writ or no writ. Soreheads may rush to court, and muttonheads may de-

cree them the land and sea and sky, but when my men are hungry, they'll eat. If the feeble current of the sluggish Thames can be neither hurried nor slowed by the wisest mandate that ever greatness stamped its seal on, think ye that what villainy argues and folly adjudges shall stand as more than a bulrush in the way of my purpose? I forget— [*Sinks back into his chair.*] I am too ready to fly to arms at the sight of mischief. I'll bring myself to submit; to return thanks for insult; to shed tears at outrage. If one I had defeated came strutting across the field where his followers lay weltering, and summoned me to surrender, I'd do it meekly. O, for the rich and varied jewels of opportunity, that I might shovel them into the roadway and pave it, for me to pass over, with hob-nailed shoes, to a chimney-corner, and a pensioner's pipe. [*Collapses.*]

DESBOROUGH. What is it, Your Highness?

OLIVER. I am not quite myself, Desborough.

MONK. O, you are ill; let us have a physician.

OLIVER. It is nothing,—except that so much is becoming immaterial to me, so much is slipping away. I can't go on much longer, Monk, with that fierce strife in the dark, where I have grappled with friends and fraternized with foes. As I look back, so many of the blows I've struck for the right come to me with bastard consequence of hav-

ing taken from A for the benefit of B. How leadership shrinks into a feeble shadow, shorn of its delusion, for the right-seeker, that it enables him to give to others, and for the self-seeker, that it enables him to take from others!

MONK. We must do something, gentlemen. A timely simple may check that which in its maturity the strength of battalions would be powerless against.

OLIVER. No remedies; the time for me to have provided against the wolf-snarl of this moment was ten years ago, when I might have gone back to my hillsides and my sheep, away from the treadmill, where trifles lord it over us, and counterfeit, to our narrow, magnifying gaze, the up-shouldering office of Atlas. Desborough, let it be announced that I have decided not to be King. Oh quiet fields! Oh shady lanes, take me back! Take me back!

[*Enter Lenthall, Fleetwood and Sir Anthony.*]

LENTHALL. The unexpected has happened, Your Highness. Slingsby's widow has broken down, and is ready to confess. She'll tell everything, but only to you. Shall I bring her in?

OLIVER. No more tales of villainy, Lenthall. Two of the guilty have suffered, and we'll treat them as proxy for others.

LENTHALL. But, Your Highness—

OLIVER. I won't see the hyena, Lenthall. Cage her up in the Tower. I won't pry into the wretched details.

LENTHALL [*in a low voice*]. Suppose she exonerates Richard.

OLIVER. Exonerates him? How could she? Yet—I'll see her. [*Exit Lenthall.*]

If this woman should prove that it was all, as to him, a harlequinade—that he, in no way consenting, was only spattered over with the guilt of others, I'd hail her as a divinity—I'd give her a triumphal car, and walk behind it in chains. Oh, oh, how weak, how doddering I am! O, for the Roman firmness that would have sent them both to the lion, or to the Tarpeian rock!

MONK [*Advancing*]. You are unnerving yourself, Your Highness, to our hurt, and yours. Won't you rest on this lounge?

OLIVER [*putting his arm around Monk's neck, steadying himself on way from his chair to lounge at left of stage.*] When I am given rest, it will grieve a few faithful hearts like thine, George. [*He reclines, brokenly, on lounge, and is surrounded by his officers. The storm grows more violent.*]

[*Enter Frances and Lenthall, from the right.*]

LENTHALL [*To Frances*]. The Protector is worse. I will rally him. [*Goes to the Protector.*]

FRANCES [*aside*]. My heart needs balm, too; and it may be had by bruising his. Ha! I may be doing them a good turn, for what does the love between villains thrive upon but suspicion and treason? [*Laughing.*] To-morrow, when I have venom'd up their thoughts, they'll be more affectionate and honey'd in their endearments than before. [*Oliver waves his officers to the rear. Monk remains, supporting him. Lenthall leads Frances to the lounge. Oliver waves Lenthall back.*]

OLIVER. What price do you want for your confession?

FRANCES. None. My husband is gone, and I want everything known.

OLIVER. An example has been made. I do not want a long list of confederates.

FRANCES. There is no list—

OLIVER. Then my son was there—by accident?

FRANCES. No; not by accident—

OLIVER. Was he there out of some—notion of chivalry for your distress?

FRANCES. No; not that. Did you not know he leaned to the royalists?

OLIVER. I knew he was not in sympathy—Ah, Ah!

FRANCES. You would not suppose he was in league with us?

OLIVER. O God, if I had not seen him there, thou mightest have rang'd thy stars into letters of warning, in vain. Why didst thou not blast mine eyeballs from their sockets before they showed him to me in that iniquitous company? [*To Frances.*] No, I'll not believe it.

FRANCES. I am here, Sir, to tell you the truth, whether you are pleased with it or not.

OLIVER. What is it? What is it?

FRANCES. The Stuarts knew that you and he were out of accord; and, owing to the—interest he took in me, I was selected to win him over. He was already convinced of the futility of your methods—

OLIVER. True, true.

FRANCES. I soon persuaded him that unless he joined us, the inevitable restoration of the royal line would be attended by a massacre of all your family. I guaranteed your personal safety, in the event you were deposed with Richard's aid, and also—ahem—a peerage for Richard. Upon these conditions he took part with us, never suspecting that our real object—

OLIVER. For a coronet! For a coronet!

FRANCES. Was to exterminate—

OLIVER. Duped! Duped! O, wolf, fettered in a sheep's impotency.

FRANCES [*aside*]. Tears! Ha! Ha!

OLIVER. O, the long vista of pretense, of affected warmth, of shallow and unmeant devotion that I look back upon!

FRANCES [*seeing him pause from weakness. Aside*]. Ah, better than tears!

OLIVER. O Grave, is it I, sighing like helpless innocence, betrayed, for that vista wherein falsity is barred out by thy steadfast violet and thy sentinel wild-flower? Is it Oliver Cromwell, rejoicing to be sheltered from discord by the dulcet whisperings of thy tall grasses, and the nightingale singings from thy shading vines? [*Oliver is overcome. The officers crowd anxiously around.*]

FRANCES [*aside*]. Oh, why may not those acid tears bring back my dead? Oh, clumsy, wasteful, and futile nature, to spend thyself on cunning devices for worthless, redundant life, and to have no process for waking the god-like dead! If the tints and graces of the flower are wrapped in the rough weed's seed,—if the throat of the new hatch'd lark is lined with amber and with gold, why may not the potency of the harping of Orpheus be infused into these murderers' tears, that I might bathe my martyred one in an ocean of them, and bring him back again?

[*Enter Richard.*]

[*Richard rushes to the side of Oliver's couch, and kneels.*]

OLIVER [*rising, with his hand pressed wildly to his heart*]. That dagger was so sharp. It was not—Richard's?

RICHARD. Oh, it was, it was—

OLIVER. No, no, 'twas not thine, my son. [*Dies. Frances, seeing that Oliver is dead, makes a gesture of triumph. There is a burst of lightning and thunder.*]

ACT THREE

ACT III

[SCENE I: *The terraced garden at Windsor Castle.*

Richard Cromwell, discovered, in the garb of Lord Protector. His mantle is of purple velvet, lined with ermine. He wears a sword.]

RICHARD. Oh, this sapping and mining joy of having! Thou comest to me, Sceptre, borne on curses, and gendering them;—yet, I'm to turn thee to use and profit! To profit? Because of the way thou hast come to me, I'll subject thy being to this law: that there shall be no use and profit in thee except for those over whom thou are wielded. I'll be thy Voice, if God wills it, saying to the enslaved of England:

> "I know that some must be hewers of wood, and drawers of water—that some must walk from the cradle to the grave, yoked with oxen, and fettered to the soil, yet there is something which thy neighbor may do, and ought to do, for thee; and I,—representing all those journeying with thee across this narrow isthmus, —I have a strength which I have absorbed from every source of power, as the bee sips honey from daffodil and from clover, from

daisy and from jessamine—a strength whose store has been added to by hands now still and by minds now glorified—a strength out of which I will distribute unto thee a portion, to reinforce thy weakness, and to ease thy harness, so that it shall cease to gall thy neck, and to deaden, and make callous thy soul."

[*Enter Lenthall.*]

Ah, Lenthall, my father's friend.

LENTHALL. I marched a long time at his side, Your Highness.

RICHARD. You have been staunch and true, Lenthall.

LENTHALL. I watched all night through the storm that came to chariot him away; and it buoyed me up to fancy that his spirit was soaring, uncramped for the first time, in the flying clouds; and that his voice came to me, bidding me to be of good cheer, and to fret not against Heaven's larceny in stealing away our comrades for a space.

RICHARD. He forgave me at the last, Lenthall. I shall have no other ambition than to be worthy of that forgiveness, and, first, I banish from my thoughts that apparition of loveliness, whose smiles, in the midst of magnanimous purposes, are robbery, and whose tears are murder.

[*Enter Ingoldsby, L, and Whaley, R.*]

INGOLDSBY. Your Highness, the city is in a tumult: it is rumored everywhere that the men

closest to you in the army are betraying you. And the royalists and republicans are as busy as bees, and almost as thick.

WHALEY. Oh, as to the royalists and the republicans, we can crush them like an eggshell.

RICHARD. They were crushed once. If it must be done again, the first crushing was to no purpose. Why keep it up? "How shall I allay opposition?" "How shall I secure my throne?" are the problems which have too much made up the horizon of the rulers of the world. The problem filling all my horizon shall be, "How to add to England's firmament this Star—'No more coining of men's groans and tears into Greatness.' "

INGOLDSBY. A very pretty sentiment, Your Highness, but of much more efficacy as the active principle of a society of Good Samaritans than of a State.

RICHARD. Let us also bid the Good Samaritan adieu. His endeavors demoralize the general obligation. There is no way of organizing all men together except through the State, and what all men together ought to do for one man is what the State must do for that man. Is that function to remain in a vague and optional desuetude forever? Is it never to be builded into workaday act, and articulate law, so that the superfluities in the accounts of some men shall be balanced against the deficiencies in the accounts of other men? I thank the sad-

ness and bitterness I've come through for a wider vision. O thou sorrowing heart, wrung by my transgressions, I'll build thee a monument out of the gladness and rejoicings of an always increasing throng!

[*Enter Fleetwood.*]

LENTHALL. Ah, Your Highness, but there is immediate danger, as Ingoldsby says.

FLEETWOOD. Danger!

RICHARD. A few royalists, and disaffected republicans, Fleetwood.

LENTHALL. No, from our supposed friends, in the army itself.

FLEETWOOD. As one of the Generals, I ought to know what is going on in the army. Some alarmist has been practicing upon you.

LENTHALL. There have been no secret councils of the officers?

FLEETWOOD. Well—Is there any harm in one officer visiting another?

LENTHALL. Oh, military chieftains do love to get together with their knitting and their darning-needles!

FLEETWOOD. Your Parliamentary hair is on end from listening to nursery tales of the way we soldiers dull our swords carving up good little children at our banquets!

LENTHALL. Playfulness in violence, sportiveness in treason, seriousness in carnality—that's

government by those whose trade it is to butcher men!

FLEETWOOD. Ah, what you like is the cackling of the fussy old maids who call themselves Parliament!

LENTHALL. An army cannot govern—

FLEETWOOD. A Parliament cannot fight battles!

RICHARD. Sirs, your debatings are as weighty and earnest as if you were prescribing for the public heartache.

LENTHALL. Ah, but this concerns your own stability.

RICHARD. If stability comes to me, it shall be as an incident to my accomplishment and dutifulness. Let us not debate who shall be the dominant power of the State. Let us not emptily, insignificantly, dishonorably ask, "Who is to direct?" when the question of questions—the highest which God permits man to answer—"How shall we direct, for the largest benefit?" remains unanswered. [*Richard indicates by a sign that the conference is at an end.*]

[*Enter Frances, L.*]

[*While Frances is speaking, all, except Richard, make their exits: Ingoldsby, Whaley, and Lenthall shaking their heads, gesticulating and murmuring; Fleetwood shrugging his shoulders and smiling.*]

FRANCES. [*aside*]. He has good reasons for holding aloof, if he knew, but he does not know: Monk has been discretion and fidelity itself. I cannot fathom it: Is it because I'm broken and faded? Has my face grown peaked; my frame bony; my steps tottering,—for the trifling reason that my heart is ashes? Do not traitor me now, ye once opulent qualities: tarry with me but for a day, an hour, until I fan his sluggish fondness into a flame, and direct it, as from a raging blow-pipe, against the steely props of the House of Cromwell. Most lovingly will I roam with him to fancy's verges, and dally with him along the hawthorn lanes,—to where the pitfalls are.

[*Frances approaches Richard, who, not seeing her, is saying, as though in summing up a train of thought.*]

RICHARD. How deadly to high aspiration this dreaming of happiness is!

FRANCES [*with an exaggerated bow*]. My allegiance, Your Highness. Alas! that I should doubt its welcome.

RICHARD. It was for me to doubt whether I stood acquitted by you.

FRANCES. Oh, if you think there are mutual offenses, let them shrive one another. And now, what of the future—our future?

RICHARD. The future of so many is in my charge that it forbids any thought of my own.

FRANCES. Oh, is to do good so grim a thing that one is fit for it only when he scourges himself, and those dear to him?

RICHARD. Ah, if I let myself think of you, I would not be safe—I would not trust myself—

FRANCES. Ha! Not trust yourself with me? Plain, old-fashion'd, stupid, dowdy me? Ha! Ha! O, Richard, what fancies possess you. Ha! 'Tis due to these rhinocerous horns. Yet I slay more men with these bloody tiger's claws, and these sharp unicorn hoofs [*showing her feet and ankles*], which, see, are cloven. O, I'm famish'd, for my hippopotamus jaws give warning and speed to my prey, and it escapes. You do not flee; you are brave.

RICHARD. A circle of monsters from the jungle could not terrify me more: only, they would not intoxicate too—

FRANCES. Stop, Puritan, not a word derogatory to intoxication, which in your humdrum experience consists of becloudment, soddenness, the unchaining of rage, and the stifling of virtue. The intoxication whereof I know beguiles Mother Time back to sportive youthfulness, and strings chaplets of pearls to hide the wrinklings of her neck; it is caught from the smile of the alchemist, Hope, as with unwearied arm he digs into the gaunt ribs of the gray mountains of Doubt and Despair, for the ores out of which he conjures happiness; it exag-

gerates the hues of morning, and lends them to the dusk of evening; it quaffs, with less effect than a sleeping-potion, the bitter hemlock of the annihilating philosophies; it weeps—the sages who hold it ceases to exist, if it weeps, are wrong—it weeps over genius, with soaring pinions broken, and over mediocrity, fevered with presumptuous ambition, fluttering its rudimentary wings in vain.

RICHARD. The intoxication whereof I know strikes off the fetters of fear and conscience, and sends forth the unshackled earthling to vibrate under the play of elemental forces, and to help himself, in nature's storehouse, as freely as Ali Baba did out of the piled-up treasures of the robber's cave. That intoxication is in the witches' wings, which is thy humour; in the lovers' choirings o'er moonlit seas, which is thy voice; in the provoking, elfish gleam, which is thine eye. It cancels the weight of responsibility and reproach; it paints before me an elysium—no, I'll follow the path of duty and of atonement—where thy finger points, thou watchful dead.

FRANCES. Unless you are made of the putty of a Mark Antony—

RICHARD. No, Frances; the purpose which drives me on is as a white-hot iron searing through the longings of my nature. I have now to redeem myself from weakness and guilt—to paint, on the imperishable canvas of history how one, stationed

on high, to rule, buried all thoughts of himself in the deep bosom of a solicitude for the good of all. Some who rule after me may need the lesson.

FRANCES. The despairing women who, after me, cry out to strength to come to the succor of weakness, will learn, in every-day lessons, that they are shrieking in the wilderness, if they have not caught the ear of ambition or passion—yet they will go on beseeching, trusting, and worshipping—

RICHARD. O, it is not coldness—It is an all-embracing tenderness that leads me on, aloof from every quarrel, but one—for putting an end to subtle forms of serfdom; for striking off the toilers' handicaps; for rescuing the backwoods boy from clods and the physical—

[*Enter Whaley.*]

[*He is nervously drawing his sword half-way from his scabbard, and snapping it back.*]

WHALEY. Treachery, treachery, everywhere—

RICHARD. That's nothing new, Whaley. Come I won't let you disturb Mrs. Slingsby with your croakings. [*To Frances.*] I had intended to give you this note that night at the Tower—in case we — succeeded. [*Hands letter to Frances.*] Here, too, is a curio I found among my father's papers. Let me know what you think of it when I see you again. [*Hands her torn envelope.*]

[*Exeunt Richard and Whaley.*]

FRANCES. Fresh from the archives of the Ogre. [*Throwing torn envelope to the ground.*] Lie there and let the uncontaminated earth suck away some of the pollution. [*Opening Richard's letter to her.*] Why should I read it? O, there may be food for jesting in it. [*Reads.*] What's this?

> "Frances: The opiate of your presence removed, my honor is awake again, and on guard. You are to go to France with your husband. Forget me, and forgive me. By a curious circling of cause and effect, you, the offended, put in motion the offense; and so, I pray you, let the tombstone-weight of your disfavor lie less heavily upon me. Farewell forever. "RICHARD."

O, blind, Satanic, malice. O, what a plummet in the depths of hatred and deceit I was! He begs forgiveness of me—of me, whom, if God is soft in His mercy, He will only rend with His lightnings! O, that great heart is pouring itself out for all about him, as it did for me, and I saw it, and scoffed and intrigued. O God, Thou hidest, deeper than the riches of Thy hills, the pure and the noble from sinful eyes. Here's this letter from Oliver's gentle custody. [*Takes up letter from ground, and opens it.*] Shall I discover in him, too, a generosity that offsets all his cruelties?

[*Reads.*] My letter to Henry, that I gave to Monk! What is this, at the bottom:

> "Intercepted, Your Highness, as it was being smuggled to Slingsby. If you are on hand at midnight, you may modify this plan.
> "GEORGE MONK."

Good and evil are in league to crush me. I am a joint target for their once opposite-swinging worlds. Ah! Ah! Eh! God's love and Hell's curses are kindling a flame about me, and I'm burning! O, O, I'm burning! [*She falls. She half rises.*] Ha! I have a secret. I'll tell it to nobody but Henry, and—maybe—Ha! Ha! —maybe—Richard.

SCENE II. *The audience chamber at Whitehall.*

[*Enter Lieutenant, with two pikemen.*]

LIEUTENANT [*to the pikemen*]. Guard this door. Admit no one without the countersign, "Runnymede." [*Sentinels assume stations.*]

[*Enter Ingoldsby, with a troop of musketeers.*]

INGOLDSBY [*to the sentinels*]. "Runnymede." [*They salute.*] [*To his musketeers.*] Halt. Ground arms. [*Troops obey.*] I'll station two of you at this entrance [*indicating*]. The countersign is "Runnymede." No one, high or low, is to enter without it. [*The two new sen-*

tinels take their places at a door opposite the pikemen.] Lieutenant, distribute sentinels throughout the palace, then proceed to headquarters for more troops. I'll meet you there.

LIEUTENANT. Company, attention! Carry arms! Right-shoulder arms! Forward March! [*Exit with troops.*]

INGOLDSBY. It's a wee flurry, but it needs firm handling—two or three heads, and banishment for a dozen or more like Brother-in-law Fleetwood and Uncle Desborough. [*Angrily.*] I'm glad something has brought this milk-and-water game to an end. [*Exit.*]

[*Enter Richard and Whaley.*]

WHALEY [*to the sentinels*]. "Runnymede." [*They salute.*]

RICHARD. Appearances bear you out. The consequence of not being a tyrant is upon me.

WHALEY. The ground is cut from under you in every direction. We have not been able to judge how much of the army has gone over. Fleetwood came to me a few hours ago, quaking and fluttering with indecision—

RICHARD. It wounds me for Fleetwood to have hesitated—

WHALEY. He made up his mind in a hurry when the idea that his soldiers might make him Protector began buzzing. He is against you.

RICHARD. Well, a brother-in-law is not so near. Now if my Uncle Desborough—

WHALEY. Desborough and Lambert are the organizers of the rebels.

RICHARD. Is it a gift of mine to drive away men I have not injured?

WHALEY. The thing is, to have the gift of not letting the men you need get away.

RICHARD. Why should they have turned against me so soon?

WHALEY. They were organized, waiting for their chance during your father's lifetime. Why, the moment Charles Stuart landed in France he began to bridge the Channel for his return, with promises of peerages and country estates. No later than yesterday a title was dangled before me—

RICHARD. Yes, the Stuarts are willing to give us almost half; but, Whaley, come what may, we'll not compromise.

WHALEY. Ah, Your Highness, that is the spirit for this crisis. By striking now, suddenly and terribly, you will end all opposition. After to-day it will be too late—their plans will be matured, their lines extended, and your own following demoralized.

RICHARD. But an hour ago I stood with those men in a sunny circle, glowing with fellowship, and

pleasant, cordial humor; and now I am to arrest and try and, perhaps, execute them!

WHALEY. Arrest? Trial? If they do not die on the spot they will reign to-morrow.

RICHARD. I can't begin killing so soon!

WHALEY. Leave it to me. I'll spare you the unpleasantness of it!

RICHARD. The responsibility would be the same.

WHALEY. I was not thinking of a general massacre; only Lambert, Monk, Desborough, Fleetwood, Cooper, and Harrison. The smaller fry may be given a chance to do better.

RICHARD. Was all the blood shed during the Revolution in vain?

WHALEY. Leadership is something which men hew their way to through rights and vows and bones and hearts. Soft-heartedness is more dangerous to its citadels than an army. [*Disturbance and lights and shouts in the street. A voice is heard, "Down with Cromwell; long live the King!"*]

RICHARD. I had dreamed that I might do something to lessen the misery in the world; and, lo, the opportunity to do so beckons to me from the inevitable shambles, and out of miasmas darkened by the vision of sad-ey'd widows and unkempt orphans. We blossom here but for a day upon the tough, gnarled oak of Time; and it is strange and

woeful incongruity for us to have been given, unlike other blossoms, the power to injure one another, and the sophistry to excuse the use of that power, as for a far-off, impalpable good. Fragile, bruised by storms, fast fading, and yet warring and slaying—it must be that Adam and his children were set here by the paramount spirits of diviner spheres to antic out, as their antipodes in thought and word and deed, a burlesque chapter in a light comedy, stag'd on one star, and watch'd from all the others. [*Shouts and trampling at the entrance.*]

[*Enter Ingoldsby, giving the countersign.*]

INGOLDSBY. Fleetwood is surrounding the palace with his musketeers.

WHALEY. Already? O, we should have struck the first blow. [*To Richard.*] Your back is to the wall; you have no option left but this [*drawing his sword*]: to cut your way out; set up your standard and rally your friends to it.

RICHARD. A great opportunity is lifting itself up to me.

WHALEY. Yes, yes; your sword.

RICHARD [*shakes his head*]. Not that way.

WHALEY. I'll find a way out, and back. Come, Ingoldsby, it is not too late to fetch our men and stamp out this treason. [*Exit Whaley and Ingoldsby, L.*]

[*Enter Fleetwood, Desborough, Lambert,*

Monk, and Sir Anthony, with drawn swords, R. The sentinels surrender.]

FLEETWOOD [*to Richard*]. Surrender!

RICHARD [*recoiling*]. Surrender?

LAMBERT. Surrender!

RICHARD. Surrender? Prove that I must. We'll reason with our swords. [*They fight. Fleetwood is disarmed.*] Not all sophistry is so easy to refute. [*Desborough falls.*] Another poor logican. [*Lambert makes a clumsy thrust, giving Richard an opening. Richard, with his sword at Lambert's throat, as if to run him through, stops. Lambert drops his sword.*] A feebler argument will never be put up until your good deeds are summoned to raise their voice for you at Heaven's bar.

[*Enter Whaley and Ingoldsby with troop, L., with swords drawn. The troop deploys and is about to charge Fleetwood and the others. Enter Fleetwood's troop, R. The troop deploys, and the two forces stand opposed, ready and eager for the fray.*]

RICHARD. Stop! None of that old formula for propping up a King; none of that dreary game of cutting throats, and breaking faith, which, like the traveller lost in the wilderness, circles ever back to its starting-point. I may not put an end to it, but I'll not join in it, and add weight to the supposition that the harpy who tore at the vitals of Prometheus

begot the lines who battle for our thrones. [*Addressing his sword.*] Farewell, good sword, thou shalt be no harpy's claw. [*Breaks, and dashes away his sword.*]

FLEETWOOD. What terms do you propose?

RICHARD. None. I propose none; and will accept none.

FLEETWOOD. The offer of a peerage holds good.

RICHARD. Go, post your guards; England is yours; let your flood of mercenaries cover it, but the Heart of the universe, who pulsateth His energies, in the tuning of wrongs into music, and of sorrows into halleluiahs—He will wither your power, and from the seed I sow to-day will cause to grow and flourish the sweetest tree of His rose-garden, in whose shade your children's children, weeping, with the rest of humanity, will dry their tears.

[*Whaley throws his sword to the floor; then hides his face in his hands, and weeps. Ingoldsby turns to his troop dejectedly.*]

[*Enter Frances.*]

[*She is clad in rags. She shoulders her way in, through the soldiers, her hair dishevelled and her look wild.*]

FRANCES. I must see the Protector. I have business of importance with the Protector. [*To Richard.*] Your Highness, I came to tell you my

secret. Shh! I have been chosen Queen of the Beggars. I'm to teach them humility, and to set their fashions. The Queen they've lost was a misfit,—Madonna-visag'd, and with step like that of the ghost of some dead Oberon. I'll give to rags a new meaning, and to patchwork an undying vogue [*she strikes a queenly pose*] and for that I'll wring gratitude from the rocks where the world stores it. I go to tread the paths of glory, and thou, kind heart, go thou, to be a common, dusty road for suffering to tramp over. If thou wouldst parcel thyself out into as many fragments as there may be men between this day and the last.—Ha! Ha! Ha!—the Queens of the Beggars will make due allotment to each, so that one and all shall have from thee an estate, with properties and revenues. [*She sees Monk, near whom Lambert's sword has fallen.*] O, here's a sword that's inhabited. [*She seizes sword.*] See, it carries on its edge the same base varlet that does the bidding of the adder's fang. O, George Monk, it were the noblest moment of thy life to be visited by the basest of varlets. [*She stabs Monk. As he falls he is caught by Sir Anthony and Fleetwood, who bear him off.*] Ho! Ho! Wrong is dead. Ha! Ha! Ha! [*She rushes from the stage, shrieking and exulting, in the throng, which departs with and after her. Huzzahs without.*]

RICHARD. I lay these trappings down.

[*Tears off the insigna of his office.*] They shall not become gyves upon a thousand bleeding wrists, and [*indicating himself*] upon one pride-weaken'd, glory-lam'd soul. [*Takes up, one at a time, his purple mantle, and the fragments of his sword, and the golden sceptre of state.*] No relic here to solace absence and gloom. So many symbols of greatness, and nothing in any of them to defy the terror-haunted silences, by calling up the echoes of long-hushed voices, or to quell lamentations and tears, by sounding the diapason of the proofs of their groundlessness. Of their groundlessness? Ay! Though wrong be the pilot, defeat the haven, and shame the pennant. Ay! Though the truce between wisdom and passion be broken, and their battling squadrons go storming and desolating across my heart. Ay! Though the eagle within thee, O, strong and tender, look with contempt upon the feebleness of thy son. Ay! Though I quit the lists like a craven and a cypher, and shall never know whether a time-hidden victory or an undying infamy comes of it; but thou, O, strong and tender, thou wilt know, with thy outlook backward, beyond chaos and its antecedent voids, and forward, through the springing up and fading out of worlds, in succession swift as that among winter-driven birds, streaming south. [*Shouts, lights, and clashing of arms without. A voice: "King Charles' scaffold was here;*

let us redeem it with a Cromwell." An angry roar goes up.] Is this thy sweet voice, are these thy gentle agents, Death? Art thou not satisfied with my surrender to thy twin-brother, Oblivion, whom men hate more than thee, and who, following fast where thou hast ravaged, stamps out memories and fames? I would not say one pleading word to thee, though thy dagger bore on its tip a poison to pervert and history all the good motives of thy slain into bad, for if there has been frankincense or myrrh in my life, it will not be lost when I am ground in that mortar, wherein God's will is the pestle, which men call eternity.

[*He opens door at the rear. On the outside is seen a red glare and a wild mob, into which he disappears.*]

[The End.]

Deacidified using the Bookkeeper process.
Neutralizing agent: Magnesium Oxide
Treatment Date: Sept. 2009

PreservationTechnologies
A WORLD LEADER IN COLLECTIONS PRESERVATION
111 Thomson Park Drive
Cranberry Township, PA 16066
(724) 779-2111

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
0 012 244 242 1